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RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEPGEA/CDR650THMIGP SHAPE BE PRIORITY  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 03 PRISTINA 000592

SIPDIS

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NSC FOR HELGERSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/20/2018

TAGS: PGOV PINR PREL KV UNMIK

SUBJECT: KOSOVO: MINISTRY AGREES TO CONTINUED USE OF  
UNMIK-STAMPED DIPLOMAS FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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\* Missing Section 001 \*  
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adversely affected by the Serbian government's decision not to honor Kosovo diplomas, regardless of the language and curriculum used by the issuing school. End Note.).

#### Community Concerned, Even Looks to Parallelism

¶5. (C) In an effort to explore possible solutions to the issue, we met October 2 with several Bosniak educators, parents, and community members, some of whom have been included in the delegations traveling to Belgrade for discussions with the Serbian Ministry of Education. The issue of education appears to have struck a sensitive spot in the Kosovo Bosniak psyche. Both UNMIK regulations and Ahtisaari-related laws dealing with education provide for communities to opt for the Serbian government curriculum and the Serbian language if desired. Parent and businessman Amet Zecirovic told us that without a return to UNMIK-stamped diplomas, Bosniak students would have to begin studying Albanian in order to attend university in Kosovo, an unsatisfactory solution particularly as the quality of education at the university level is considered to be vastly inferior to Serbia's. Zecirovic even went so far as to say lack of support from Kosovo institutions could lead to Kosovo Bosniaks to ask the Serbian government to set up parallel schools in Bosniak areas to ensure access to quality higher education for Kosovo Bosniak students.

#### Dissatisfaction with Bosniak Politicians

¶6. (C) Another factor delaying resolution of this issue may have been the inaction of the Bosniak community's own politicians. Nearly all of the Bosniaks we met with were highly critical of their representatives in Pristina, whom they consider to have ignored serious concerns about education in order to maintain good relations with Kosovo Albanian politicians in the Government of Kosovo. Isak Murtovi, an instructor at the (Bosniak) teacher training faculty in Prizren, told us that leaders of Kosovo's leading

Bosniak political party, VAKAT, have largely ignored the problem. High school teacher Nebija Aljilji agreed with Murtovi, saying that VAKAT leaders Dzezair Murati and Sadik Idrizi were "unwilling" to deal with the problem.

¶7. (C) Dr. Mehmed Meta, a recently-fired instructor at the Bosniak Educational Faculty in Prizren, recently wrote a letter published in the online forum "Bosnjaci-net" and in the newspaper "Bosanskiiaaf," on October 24, in which he attacked Murati and Idrizi, accusing them of hoarding political power within the Bosniak community and appointing only unqualified cronies under their "patronage" to influential positions, while trying to "eliminate" all those who disagree with them, particularly in the Educational Faculty. Meta claimed that due to his disagreement with the VAKAT leaders, he had been targeted by them and then removed from his post. (Note: In recent months, 4 instructors at the faculty who disagreed with VAKAT over educational issues have lost their jobs. End Note.).

Comment

¶8. (C) We are glad that the Ministry of Education has agreed to the continued use of UNMIK stamps on Bosniak diplomas. The number of students requesting this facilitation will be small, and the stamps are affixed by schools directly, not by UNMIK. This means that the impact of an ongoing UNMIK role in the Kosovo education system will be negligible. It is also quickly and easily implemented and avoids the much larger headache of having the Kosovo Bosniaks opt for the Serbian parallel system. We believe this last point is what persuaded Hoxhaj to make his decision. While we do not want to wade too deeply into local Bosniak politics, the fact that we only heard about the severity and implications of this problem from community members rather than their political leaders, is telling. We also note that Kosovo's Deputy Minister of Education, Usmen Balzi, is a Kosovo Bosniak with close ties to VAKAT. When we approached him to discuss the issue, he denied that a problem existed and told us we were

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"misinformed," thus giving credence to his own community's complaint that their political leaders were ignoring the problem. He has since changed his tune.

¶9. (C) (cont'd). Further down the road looms the larger issue of Kosovo fulfilling its legal obligations towards its non-Serb minority communities, who have largely supported independence. Along with the ICO, we are engaged with the Kosovo Ministry of Education in an effort to ensure that laws on language and curriculum are followed. This process will take time and effort to complete, and the active assistance of Kosovo's Bosniak leaders is critical. Kosovo's Bosniak community is small and not politically or economically powerful, thus it needs to be united to achieve its key objectives. We will continue to follow this issue, along with our international partners. END COMMENT.  
KAIDANOW